

**Abstract**

A coupler includes an analog port for interfacing with a telephone answering system a network port that is adapted for connection to an insecure network. The security 5 problem associated with eavesdropping over insecure network is overcome by encrypting the messages that exit through the coupler's network port. In one embodiment, the coupler and the telephone answering system are distinct hardware elements and the coupler is connected to the TAD. In another embodiment, a single processor and associated memory perform the functions of the coupler's controller and of the telephone 10 answering system, thus forming a single device that has an analog port for connecting to the public switched telephone network, as well as a port for connection to the insecure network. In yet another embodiment, the coupler/TAD combination includes a control port to allow connection to the control port of an ISDN telephone.

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